

were aggravated in the fall and her body being handled afterward ultimately led to her death, Lillis said. But there was a lot of suspicion about whether or not the fall was accidental.

"I've been in the business for a long time and I realize the value and importance of the 911 calls to a case," Lillis said. "But, I guess I wasn't that familiar with the method you would use to constructively analyze a call like that. It is quite interesting."

Like Colorado's Stoffel, Lillis sent the case to Harpster and Adams for review.

"He graciously reviewed the data, gave me a call and we both went through it together," Lillis said. "We reached our determinations at about the same time. It certainly gave me at least some level of comfort that the investigation into his level of culpability was probably on the right track. Like any other investigation, you follow different pieces that you're looking at. This was one piece that bolstered the fact that we were looking at this in the right fashion."

Lancaster, Penn. Investigator Larry Martin's case was already in trial when he received the FBI article about call analysis. Harpster and Adams reviewed the 911 call and came to the same conclusion as Martin had after a grueling six-month investigation.

"If we would have gotten him six months earlier, it would have been great," Martin said. "I have used his checklist on two other cases where it really helped us

out. We were really curious about what he had to say. We were basically curious to see if we missed anything. We knew he did it and that the 911 tape was bogus. In a few minutes, [Harpster and Adams] came up with the same thing we had after we listened to that tape for hours.

"These 911 tapes are incredible," Martin continued. "I think it is a resource we should use more in our investigations."

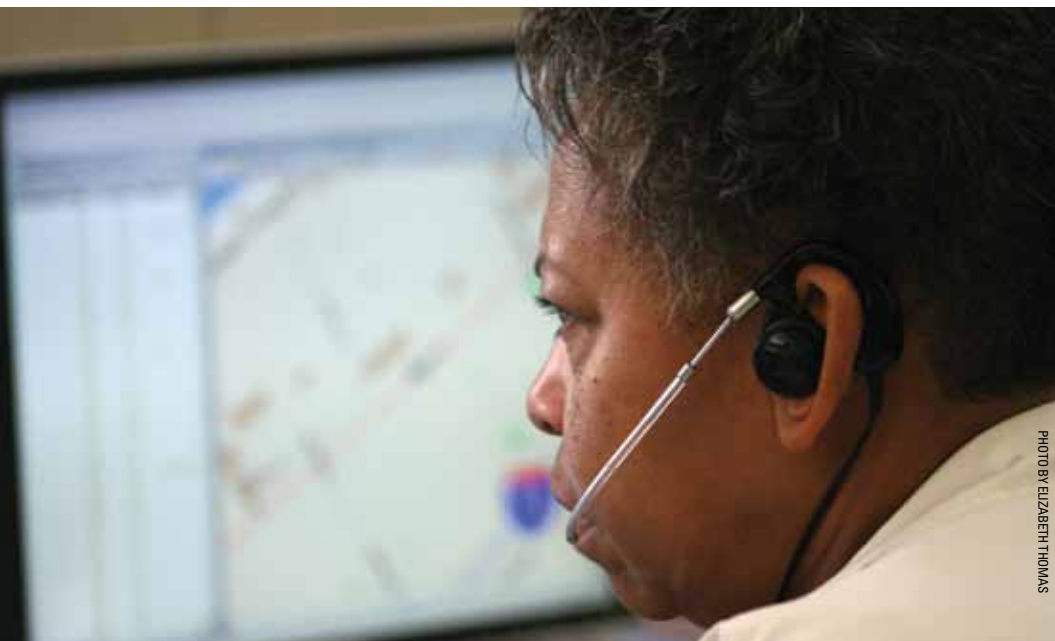
Harpster agrees. The 911 call sometimes is the only statement officers ever get from an offender. And after 28 years on the job, Harpster said he wishes he had known years ago what he knows now.

"When I used to be a detective sergeant, I had three Sudden Infant Death Syndrome cases in one week," Harpster said. "We had our protocol. I would go meet my partner, we would go to the childrens' hospital, talk to the ER nurse and ER doctor, examine the body, talk to the family, we may have done a search warrant — we never looked at the 911 call. I thought, 'Why should I? I'm here?' After studying them, I know what a guilty father, mother or boyfriend sounds like, and I'm sick to my stomach that I know I missed some murders.

"This is why I'm teaching it all over the place," Harpster continued. "I want cops and investigators to know the difference between a guilty or innocent caller, so they cannot miss things."

Kelly Foreman can be reached at kelly.foreman@ky.gov or (859) 622-8552.

▼ The homicide caller's vocal cues are as important as the words used to tell the story. A mother who is hysterical after finding her child not breathing is more likely to be innocent than a father who seems cold and calm about his lifeless child.



Do you want to know more about analyzing 911 homicide calls?

If you have questions about how you can use this tool in your own investigations, please contact Moraine (Ohio) Police Lt. Tracy Harpster. He can be reached by email at tracy.harpster@gmail.com, or by calling (937) 535-1153.

